Despite the predominantly male focus of Athenian politics, the feminine looms large in the Athenian civic imagination, and this apparent contradiction...
poses some interesting questions. How does a city of men exclude women from citizenship and yet derive its name from a goddess, Athena? What is the relationship between Athens and Athena? What exactly does the division of the sexes have to do with Athenian ideas of citizenship? And what about autochthony—the ultimate exclusion of women—do the Athenians really think they are born from the earth? These are some of the important and complicated questions Nicole Loraux poses in *The Children of Athena*, the English translation of *Les enfants d'Athena* (Paris, 1984). The book, which builds upon her previous work on the Athenian funeral oration, moves beyond the widely accepted claim that women were denied political power in Athens in order to record "the difficulties that civic discourse encounters as it tries to imagine fully the utter exclusion of women." (p. 21, her italics)

Metaphors of space and travel influence both the content and style of this excellent and insightful treatment of Athenian civic ideology. In exploring autochthony and the Athenian imaginary, L. locates her analysis in the topography, both real and symbolic, of fifth century Athens. Three chapters map out the site of the Acropolis and investigate the significance there of Athena, Erichthonius, and Pandora. In addition, the myths of Athenian autochthony represent Athens as a metaphorical family, and L. shows how the important roles of mother, father, and nurse are variously distributed to Ge, Zeus, the earth, Athena, and the fatherland. Because the politics of Athenian civic origins are gendered, they inevitably confront the conflict between a social construct of citizenship which is exclusively male and the need for women to reproduce such a construct. The final chapters focus on two plays, the *Lysistrata* and the *Ion*, as specific dramatic texts which include and further complicate the themes of citizenship and the gender of politics in Athens. This English translation appears ten years after the original French version, and in an epilogue L. comments on some of the scholarly reaction her book has provoked and details the development of her own thinking on the material over the last decade.

The introduction, "Autochthony and the Athenian Imaginary," approaches the topic of autochthony by way of an admirably clear and useful methodological statement. L. negotiates the treacherous middle ground between the overly positivist "partisans of realia" who exclude myth and the symbolic from any true historical endeavor and the "friends of discourse" who, in the other extreme, spin out excessively abstract models of signification without regard for the political, the historical, or the real. L. grapples head on with the problems of writing "a history book about the myth of autochthony," by providing a historically and politically contextualized account of Athenian civic ideology. Acknowledging the contradictions between individual representations of the civic imaginary, she explores the relationships between myth and the particular genre of civic discourse in which it is embedded as a way to provide a framework for understanding these contradictions instead of rationalizing them away. For those of us who find ourselves working at the intersection(s) of myth and history, literature and politics, past and present, this introduction (and the ensuing discussion) provide an invaluable methodological manifesto.

L. concludes the introduction with a brief lexicon of the mythological and ritual protagonists in stories about Athens and includes a collection of vase
paintings which represent the births of Erichthonius, Athena, and Pandora. The first chapter then confronts two conflicting accounts of Athenian autochthony, and L. locates these two versions in different parts of the city. As if each site produces its own language, on the Acropolis, autochthony is told as the story of Athena and Hephaestus, of a sexual encounter not quite consummated but which produced, nonetheless, Erichthonius, born from the earth. In the Kerameikos, however, Athena disappears and the City takes her place; the mythological Ge is replaced by the secular patria, or fatherland, and the literally earthborn Erichthonius is supplanted by a collective vision of all Athenian citizens born equally from the earth. Thus a mythological, representational view of autochthony competes with a secular, anonymous one. L. argues that we need not choose between them. Instead she focuses on the symbolic order evoked by competing narratives and calls our attention to the spaces in which these representations are enacted. Two other civic sites operate significantly in the Athenian civic imaginary as well: the agora, the middle ground between the Acropolis and the Kerameikos through which ritual processions move and in which the statues of the eponymous heroes are erected and the theatre of Dionysus—a place for consolidation as well as polarity, for reconciliation as well as conflict.

The next two chapters directly address the problems of defining the role of women in a city whose citizens claim to be born not from women but from the earth. The myth of Pandora, who is represented on the base of Athena's statue on the Acropolis, describes the origins of a race of women, born from Pandora, apart from men. L. argues convincingly here (and she returns to this point in the epilogue) that Pandora does not function in Greek myth as an earthmother figure; unlike Eve, she is not the mother of humanity, but only the mother of the race of women. In her subsequent discussion of the Athenian name, which has no feminine form, L. draws out the implications of the Pandora story for Athens and notes the overdetermination of masculine values as reflected in the name of Athenian citizens. They are Athenian men, sons of Erichthonius; they have an origin and a continued identity rooted in the soil, in Athenian history, myth, and politics. The women, however, are descended from Pandora, from a Panhellenic, non-Athenian narrative, one which also describes women as contradictory, disparate, a source of confusion. Thus the Athenian political imaginary includes no category of female Athenian citizens—only a race of women, descended from Pandora, by definition born outside the historical and political loop.

L. next turns to drama as the site where answers to these questions about the division between the sexes and Athenian politics can be articulated (both for us and the Athenians). L. thus concludes her journey through Athenian symbolic topography with a stop at the theatre of Dionysus and a discussion of Aristophanes' Lysistrata and Euripides' Ion. The Lysistrata, L. argues, stages the conflict between the race of women and the city of Athens as a dialogue between Athena and Aphrodite. Again place is important—Aphrodite's site stands at the base of the Acropolis, Athena occupies the summit, and the play enacts a movement from one site to the other. Its plot represents the friction between the race of women and the polis. Aphrodite functions as the goddess of the race of women, and Athena's divine power focuses on the city of Athens. L. suggests that the institution of marriage, an institution which integrates the female genos
into the city, similarly entails the collaboration of Aphrodite and Athena. Aristophanes presents each goddess at work for the other in a world turned upside down, an inversion of civic reality that exposes its ruptures and rifts.

In the final chapter, L. shows that Euripides' *Ion* is all about Athens, starring the Acropolis and taking the discourse of autochthony as its script. L. characterizes the *Ion* as a political tragedy in which "the exaltation of citizenship intersects with that of imperialism." Her analysis of the play, however, neglects the colonial significance of Delphi and Apollo. L. focuses on Kreousa as the sole survivor of Athens' founding family; she shows that she functions as a kind of epikleros or heiress. As the daughter of Erechtheus, king of Athens, Kreousa's filial obligations to preserve her father's household merge with the needs of the city. Consequently, her dowry is autochthony, legitimacy, and Athenian political identity. Yet, it is none other than Apollo, both as patron deity of colonization and as in his role as Patroos, co-ancestor of Athenians and Ionians, who rapes the autochthonous princess in this play and thereby physically unites Athens' Ionian imperial identity with its democratic autochthonous one. The integrity of Kreousa as metaphor for autochthony is violated by the colonial and Ionian themes embodied in Apollo Patroos and Delphi. The rape, typical of colonial traditions, jeopardizes Kreousa's position as legitimate autochthonous mother and sets the action of the play in motion. An Athenian family descended simultaneously from autochthony and Ionia can then rule a land which is both democratic and imperialist. Euripides combines colonial discourse (with all its attendant imperialist ideology) and the rhetoric of autochthony to produce a view of Athenian origins and citizenship that infuses native legitimacy with imperial authority and reconciles a democratic vision with that of an Athenian empire.

Traditionally in Athenian mythology, Xuthus is Ion's father. Since Euripides alters the myth to make Ion Apollo's son and sets the play at Delphi (the starting point for all colonial expeditions), we should consider the *Ion* in light of the themes and strategies of city foundation literature. While L. is certainly right to dismiss those who would want to read the *Ion* as a celebration of the Delphic religion, the symbolic significance of Delphi as tragic topography requires further exploration. As we also see in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, on the tragic stage, Delphi is both the place from which new civic entities are born and at which civic conflicts can be reconciled.

L.'s discussion of the *Ion* is detailed, insightful. She restores a seriousness and complexity to a play that has long been overlooked or treated as a kind of sub-standard tragi-comedy or melodrama. The play breaks all the rules of Athenian citizenship, and for this reason provides the perfect conclusion to this ambitious yet highly successful study of the Athenian imaginary. As L. ex-

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plains, and I think this sums up what is best about this book: "I felt it was important because the Acropolis, where Kreousa suffers on the tragic stage, assumes all its complexity—the complexity of non-Euclidian space composed of superpositions rather than extension; because the tragedy entrusts the task of taking up the challenge of autochthony to a woman, on that very Acropolis where the Athenians once installed Pandora and because the autochthony of the funeral orations, the myths of origin, the cults of the sacred hill, and the images of the vase painters all coalesce, then disentangle and then are composed once more into a story, in this tragic intermingling of discourse and representation." (p. 235)

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The Children of Athena is a complex book, but this is where its real strength lies. L. proves herself an invaluable guide through the spectacular, if often treacherous, terrain of Athenian civic ideology.

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